The IDLER

Public Occurrences, Comment, Excursions & Rational Entertainment

Nr 28 FEBRUARY 1967 25c THE COPY

Keep the Seat, Baby!

TOO MANY FINGERPRINTS

In Which a Few Notes of Caution are Sounded in the Case of Rev. Powell; Three Poems by Lee Pennington; Some Thoughts About Real Estate; Charlie McDowell Reveals George Romney's Secret Weapon; as well as Several Other Diversions.

The case of Rev. Adam Clayton Powell--the current moral crisis rattling the roof beams of the Republic--has brought forth one of those occasional surges of public piety that attempt, through momentary fervor, to compensate for our normal ethical languor. Righteous America is awake once more and on the march; the whites of Mr. Powell's eyes are almost within range.

The Harlem legislator and theologian is accused of looseness with (in order of importance to the national mind) women, tongue and federal monies. He has been in contempt of civil authority, a fugitive from the law, and he refuses to show any remorse for his failings. On the contrary, he has been arrogant and flippant.

The punishment proposed for Mr. Powell is the loss of his congressional seat. A strong case can be made against such punishment on constitutional and other legal grounds. Furthermore, there is a good defense based on precedent. As recently as 1956, a member of the House was convicted of income tax evasion, sentenced to jail and fined $10,000. Not only did the offending gentleman subsequently regain his seat, but his seniority as well. Senator Dodd has not been made to stand aside while more serious charges against him are examined. Nor were Mississippi's congressmen unseated last session despite massive evidence of the disenfranchisement of Negroes in their districts. Congress has repeatedly declined to act in cases involving far more evil than that alleged in the instance of Mr. Powell. Even Senator McCarthy got off with censure.

In fact, should the charges lodged against the former chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee be pressed with equal vigor against all other deserving legislators in the land, it would become difficult to raise a quorum in either house of Congress or for our state legislatures to exist at all.

But there is no danger of a crusade to revolutionize American political morality. The pious American's taste is for the specific, not the general. We appease our gods by human sacrifice, not by conforming to their will. One can imagine the Mexican warrior using Powell's words as they start to cut out his heart on top of the pyramid: "I've done no more, perhaps less, than others. I just didn't stay in my place." It's hard to understand at such moments that they don't really want to hurt you, but are

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The Idler

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just trying to save themselves.

Adam Clayton Powell makes an excellent target for our present expiatory efforts. We are engaged in a dirty and bad war; the poor refuse to go away; and the Negroes are becoming a pain. We need a Powell to divert us from such conundrums, to let us concentrate on the faults of men rather than the evils of a society.

A. C. Powell, M. C. (provisional), fits the role perfectly. He is one of the last of the political swashbucklers in an era when the average public man is a bland, carefully pumiced sort of fellow whose virtues are minimal and whose sins are kept carefully unobtrusive.

Mr. Powell belongs to a near-extinct breed of politician: men whose lives contain complex and contradicting forces of strength, in whom good and bad struggle rather than compromise, in whom there is humor, pathos, arrogance, and hurt, in whose veins blood rumbles like a freight train rather than lying in stagnant, semi-congealed pools. They are men who inspire other men to write novels. Men who distill both the good and the bad of what it means to be human.

Who would bother to write a book based on the life of Morris Udall?

We do not understand Adam Clayton Powell because most of our politicians are sent down to us from councils above, carefully prepared so as not to offend and so that they stay soft and color-fast in even the harshest of water.

But men like Powell explode up out of the mass. They are not prefabricated; they simply can't be prevented. Their constituency is dispair and misery and their own character a confused sea of conflicting values and goals, desires and fears.

We have seen them before. Mr. Powell is strikingly reminiscent of the old-fashion, flamboyant, white southern politician. When he refers to his intimate relationship with the Lord, he recalls Eugene Talmadge telling the poor citizens of Georgia: "Y'all only got three friends in this world: the Lord God Almighty, the Sears Roebuck catalog and Gene Talmadge--and you can only vote for one of them."

Is he unrepentent about his social life? Hark back to Louisiana's Earl Long who once told a press conference: "A'm goin' down to get a little cush-cush. If you know anybody's got more of that dan he can use, tell him to send it up to old Uncle Earl."

Does he defy civil authority? Let George Wallace and Orville Faubus trade notes with him.

(Please turn to page 11)

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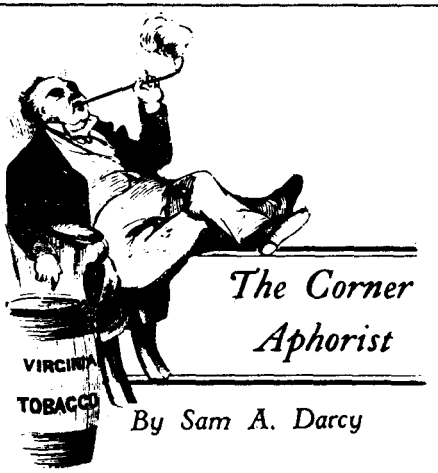


The Corner Aphorist

By Sam A. Darcy

From the New York Times(1-5-67):

REP. FORD TELLS REPUBLICANS THEY CAN LAY FOUNDATION FOR '68

Warrenton, Va., Jan. 4--About 50 of the newly elected Republican Congressmen began a GOP indoctrination course at a rural "think center" today.

Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, the House Minority Leader, chuckled happily over his new broad.

(Those ingenious Republicans! Lay a foundation? Wow!)

* * * * *

If we understand Archbishop Spellman correctly, he urges, for Vietnam, increased prayers for peace and increased appropriations for war. That's what we like. The spiritual approach.

* * * * *

Add to the list of big-mouths who are crying for more war but keep their sons safe at home (Rusk, McNamara, Humphrey, Symington) the name of Mendel Rivers, Congressman from South Carolina. On TV, in snarling tones, he urged escalating the Vietnames war, level Hanoi flat, level Haiphong flat, shoot and bomb the hell out of them, he said. He has a son of draft age. Why doesn't he send him to the front? Or is it the death of the sons of the rest of us that makes Mr. Rivers so eager?

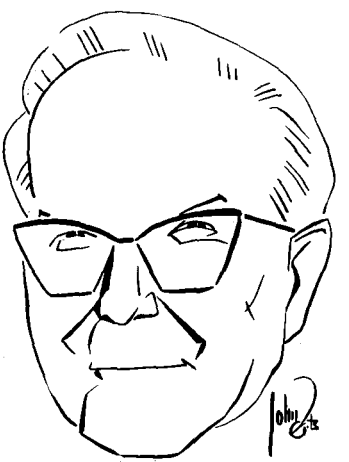
Understand us: we don't want any American boys shipped into that dreadful swamp--that includes the sons of Humphrey, McNamara, Rusk, Rivers or Symington--but did God give these men the right to big-talk the sons of other parents into pine coffins, while they save their own?

* * * * *

Mr. Nixon is reported to have said that it would be "disastrous" for the Republicans to run in 1968 on a platform which advocates a peace offensive. The GOP could nominate LBJ again. Pious Lyndon can talk two ways, for peace to please the people, for war to please the Republican leadership.

* * * * *

What a euphemism--the "credibility gap"--when we mean a bunch of liars. Next thing you know, we'll be putting peacock feathers on coyotes.



RIVERS: So Eager

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BUCKLEY

William Buckley, the conservative, wrote a book explaining how he was defeated in the N. Y. elections. Cousin Barnegat brought us a copy. Barnegat can't understand that defeat. Another candidate ran on almost the same platform and was elected. His name was Disraeli.

* * * * *

A curious phenomenon in our nation is the indignation of some against unfortunates who must seek welfare subsidies to live. Sterilize them, scorn them, imprison them, they cry. Welfare officials have been known to break into their homes at 5 am hoping to catch them in bed with illegal receivers (as the football announcers say).

This is all over a few thousand dollars a year paid to each, mostly to care for helpless and innocent children.

But these same self-righteous citizens are strangely silent over hundreds of millions (repeat, hundreds of millions) given by our government, out of our taxes, to fat cats who are already millionaires. For example:

--Owners of private and business aircraft get a $160 million annual subsidy, about $5000 for each plane owned.

--Shipowners get about $200 million each year.

--Subsidies to oil billionaires, rich farmers, the aircraft kings, and the railroad magnates, run to billions.

And we are disturbed because some black children, born out of wedlock, are fed! The quality of some Christian charity is indeed strained.

* * * * *

They say that LBJ is getting short tempered with his critics. We can understand that. It goes back to our first president.

George Washington was being entertained by a friend on a winter's evening, who set him with his back to a roaring fire. Washington found it too hot, and moved.

"Why," said his host, "I thought an old general like you could stand fire better than that."

"I never could tolerate fire in my rear," he answered, "not in my rear."

FIGHT NOW, PLAN LATER
IS EXPERTS' VIET VIEW
--Washington Post headline

We've noticed.

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Three Poems

By Lee Pennington

KING DUST

The last car left wind blowing,
Left us blinking. It was the last
Car. Goodnight. I'm about to roll.
A stolen army blanket. I'm about
to curl up with the rattlesnakes.
Now is the time to spit and think
Of hot coffee and cars. Now's
the time to catch sand while
It's still hot. A man
Can go insane trying to warm
The whole earth under him!

MULTIVERSITY

Multiversity--Detroit of man--
Polishes and shines
The metal of generation
And leaves to our bards
Indifference of melon rinds--
Piles of human junkyards.

LATE SHOWS

I cup my hand to hear self
whispering over popcorn and 2 a. m.
t. v. upped commercial blur
& feel my words spit back into
my stung open mouth like
finger-in-the-bottle spewed beer.

Getting up so I don't care if I have
20% fewer cavities or use poo poo
razor blades. Perhaps I'll skip the shave
come morning and cover up not showering
with after-lotion.

I've seen all the late shows
three times around anyway
why should I care if the sudden between
film blurb noises are louder
and keep waking me up
so I can choose whether I want to watch
what I've already seen and don't care
for anymore?

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One of the most persistent myths about housing is the one that holds that property values invariably decline when a Negro moves into a white neighborhood. Although there is a heap of facts to challenge this myth, it is not only the bigots who still cling to it. Many builders, investors, liberals and civil rights supporters also accept it, and regard integrated housing as a good deed rather than good business.

Washington Notes

Most fair housing advocates, for example, have never heard of Luigi Laurenti. I hadn't either until a friend sent me a review of Laurenti's book "Property Values and Race" (University of California, 1960). The review, which was published in Land Economics six years ago, was written by Anthony Downs, an official of Real Estate Research Corporation. Real Estate Research is in the business of giving hard-bitten appraisals to people who want to know where to locate a bowling alley, or whether a shopping center at Exit 6 of the Beltway will succeed, or if there is a market for anothing housing development in a particular community. The rates they charge do not leave them much room for knee-jerk liberalism.

So it was interesting to find Downs writing that "the great contribution of Laurenti's study is its irrefutable proof" of the falsity of the belief that "nonwhite entry inevitably mean deteriorating neighborhoods."

Laurenti made an analysis of neighborhoods in seven cities, principally San Francisco, Oakland, and Philadelphia. He took twenty neighborhoods in which nonwhite entry had occured during a fifteen year period and compared them to nineteen control neighborhoods in which no entry had occurred. Downs summarized Laurenti's conclusions thusly:

"When nonwhites enter a previously all-white neighborhood consisting primarily of single-family dwellings, and no other changes in neighborhood character occur, then prices of residential property in the area will not decline and may very well rise in comparison with prices in similar neighborhoods that have remained all white. In other words, nonwhite entry alone--as distinguished from such changes in physical use as increased density--rarely causes residential property to fall in price, and quite often causes it to rise."

While it is true that racial transition may be accompanied by panic selling or higher density and the lower prices that go along, these characteristics are by no means the typical result of integrating a neighborhood. "In itself," Downs noted, "Laurenti's study does not automatically destroy all connection between racial transition and factors like high density or low maintenance... But insofar as the connection between nonwhite entry and declining property prices is perpetuated by the belief that such a connection is inevitable, Laurenti's proof that this belief is false definitely furthers better housing and racial equality."

Downs, writing in 1960, admitted that the study would probably take years to have a significant impact. But he added:

"For informed members of the real estate profession it is of immediate

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importance. From now on, predicting the effects of nonwhite entry upon residential prices must be considered a matter of analyzing the relevant markets involved in each specific area rather than applying any invariant rules about the effects of race. Laurenti's evidence that nonwhite entry does not depress prices shifts the burden of proof onto those who claim the opposite. "

Another, and more recent, study of the same subject was made by Sherwood Ross, now editorial director of a Washington radio station, while he was working for the Urban League. Ross's study was based upon 1. 3 million private inner-city homes across the nation, of which 100,000 were nonwhite. Ross found that the following percentage increases in housing prices had taken place over a ten year period:

--Predominantly white neighborhoods: 35%
--Predominantly Negro neighborhoods: 61%
--Neighborhoods integrated by Negroes: 42%
--Stable integrated neighborhoods: 45%

Other examples of similar research could be cited, but the unfortunate fact is that none of it has had any real effect upon the partnership of racial prejudice and economic fear that has kept Negroes out of thousands of all-white neighborhoods around the country. Between 1960 and 1965, the nation's cities lost 270,000 in total white population and gained 2 million Negroes. The suburbs, on the other hand, gained 9. 2 million whites but only 400,000 Negroes. The Negro has been consigned to the inner city which has become to society what the automobile dump is to General Motors.

The combination of fear and hate in the housing business has many manifestations. The state of Maryland, for example, came dangerously close to electing a governor last fall who based his entire campaign on a segregated housing platform. A succession of presidents have been afraid to use their executive power to enforce fair housing in publicly financed construction. Realtors, developers and investors are wary of becoming involved in integrated housing. And Congress, when offered a chance last session to make a major attack on the problem through fair housing legislation, turned tail and ran.

The Negro has been left to fight for freedom of residence in a painfully slow guerilla war, case by case, sale by sale, in smug white communities across the land.

Fortunately, he has the support of a few individuals and groups who are as fervant in their advocacy of fair housing as most of the nation is indifferent. One of the most important of these is Morris Milgram, described in a Harper's article a few years back as "a kind of Johnny Aplpeseend of interracial housing. " Milgram is a liberal and an idealist, but more significantly he is also a businessman. His talk of fair housing is heavilly peppered with expressions such as "cash flow, " "debentures, " "partnership escrow

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accounts" and the like; for Milgram not only talks fair housing, he makes it.

Milgram is a home builder whose first experience in constructing an integrated community, outside of Philadelphia 12 years ago, has led him into a career of fair housing building, purchase and management. He is convinced that fair housing is good business and cites the experience of his own ventures to prove it.

For example, Milgram--with the help of one major backer--moved into Washington in 1962. His firm took title to a 73-apartment complex in the white northwest section of town. Before commencing to integrate the white-only apartments, a research organization conducted a survey of the tenants. Sixteen per cent of the families said they would move if Negroes were allowed to rent there. Ten per cent said that they would consider moving.

But, according to Milgram, "so far as we know not a single person" moved because of race when the apartments were integrated.

Milgram did not rush into integration. First, he redecorated the lobby, painted, landscaped and provided some new air conditioners. "We didn't want tenants to believe that introducing Negroes was part of downgrading the property," he says.

Since the apartments have been integrated, the vacancy rate of the apartment buildings has averaged less than one per cent, save for a brief period recently when a change of managers took place.

Milgram and his financial supporters have caused the integration of several other apartment buildings in the Washington area. The statistical results seem unimpressive--less than four dozen Negro families now living in previously all-white dwellings--but with each enterprise Milgram builds the economic argument for integrated housing. In addition, he says, "Almost 600 white families are having the advantages of living in genuinely integrated housing." He is convinced that the facts show that integration is a negligible factor in the success or failure of his ventures.

Milgram has tried the use of quotas to maintain racial balance in his developments but has abandoned the concept. "Quotas get in the way," he argues, "You're dealing with human beings."

Milgram now prefers to rely upon judgment for the proper mixture and finds that selective advertising helps to maintain the balance. Besides, he claims, experience does not bear out the stereotype of Negro demand overwhelming white demand in newly integrated projects. He has, in fact, had to call repeatedly upon civil rights organizations--and occasionally upon Negro newspaper advertising--to build up nonwhite demand.

Fair housing laws? Milgram believes we need them. But even if one had been passed last session, he says, "many builders would have tried for years to evade the law--not because they are bigots but because they are frightened to death."

And it is not only the builders who are scared. Milgram finds that

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potential investors often regard fair housing as a supremely high risk venture even though these same men will casually drop thousands of dollars into some highly speculative stock market venture.

Some progress is being made in the effort to change this attitude. From his office at 51 East 42nd St., New York, Milgram manages the Mutual Real Estate Investment Trust, in which 2000 persons have invested almost $2 million. This money is being used to buy and integrate apartment houses. M-REIT has already purchased four buildings in white areas far from centers of Negro concentration. Investors in M-REIT include churches, foundations, unions and a pension fund, but most are individuals interested in fair housing.

Still, the power of fear in the housing business remains great. It must be destroyed before the Negro will be allowed to live where he chooses. Today the hard-core bigots draw their strength from the timid: timid builders, investors, legislators and homeowners. The message that people like Laurenti and Milgram have is an important one, for once the fear is made to recede, the haters will find themselves very much alone. (s. s.)

The McDowell Papers

By Charles McDowell, Jr.

A great many newspapers carried an interesting photograph the other day of an encounter between two Republican celebrities, Governor George Romney of Michigan and Ronald Reagan of California.

The picture was dominated by a forefinger--the most ubiquitous forefinger in American politics, the forefinger that is carrying its waggler on a quest for the presidency itself. It was Governor Romney's forefinger, of course. It always is.

There was Romney, looking earnestly into Reagan's innocent eyes and waggling the trusty right forefinger under Reagan's chin. If ever there was the perfect symbol of the aggressive, decisive executive lecturing the less dynamic, somewhat bemused neophyte, this was it. It always is.

Students of the Romney forefinger were not surprised to see it brought to bear against Reagan. To them, the picture was merely one more in the sequence that records the rise of Romney from corporate image-maker to president of an automobile company to Governor of Michigan to leading Republican possibility for President.

Jerome P. Cavanagh, for example, first became aware of the forefinger when he became the Democratic mayor of Detroit in 1962 and went to his first meeting with Republican governor Romney to discuss state and city finances.

Photographers were admitted while the two men were chatting innocuously. As the photographers approached, Cavanagh remembers that Romney went on talking about the weather or whatever it was, but thrust his right forefinger at Cavanagh's chest.

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The pictures in the papers the next day left no doubt who was telling whom about state and city finances. Romney was in firm command, and the young mayor of Detroit looked like a docile schoolboy.

The next time Cavanagh encountered Romney, it happened again--and again and again. At the end of a year Cavanagh's staff was looking for an informal picture of the mayor and the governor for publication in the city's annual report. They searched the city's files and the Detroit newspapers' but they could not find one satisfactory photograph that was not dominated by the Romney forefinger.

Cavanagh learned to lift his own forefinger in defense; when they meet now, they seem to stand there pointing at each other. There is said to be a picture in the possession of collectors that shows Romney escalating the battle--pointing two forefingers at Cavanagh from different angles while the poor young mayor is caught with only one at the ready.

Most of Romney's colleagues on the national scene apparently have not caught on to the forefinger. In the past year or so, I have seen photographs of him putting the whammy on virtually all of the possible Republican candidates for President. He particularly likes to use it against Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York, who usually looks strangely paralyzed in the presence of the forefinger.

There is even a picture of Romney aiming the finger at President Johnson, who looks bored, and another of him lifting the finger slightly, respectfully, at General Eisenhower.

Romney is resourceful. He uses the right forefinger, the left, or both. Sometimes, when he is waggling the right forefinger, he clenches the left hand to show even more force than usual, even anger, or he opens the left hand and spreads the fingers--as in the picture with Reagan--to demonstrate that he is ticking off arguments or instructions in an organized way.

On the national scene, only Richard Nixon is a match for him. The former Vice President lifts a forefinger at the sight of Romney, and Romney is wary of him. Nixon is formidable--after all, he once became the hero of a thousand front pages when he waved a forefinger in the face of Nikita Khruschev.

Romney and Nixon have skirmished, but they have never had it out point-blank. Surely we have that to look forward to in the months ahead.

(Copyright, Newsday, 1966)

►There is a report out of California that the next president of the University of California will be Joe Pyne.

►Reader John Neary wonders about letting the Red Chinese into the United Nations. Wouldn't that, he asks, be like putting China in a bull shop?

* * * * * * *

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(POWELL CONT'D).....

Does he libel? It happens every week on the floors of Congress, protected by the laws of immunity.

No, we can not say that Mr. Powell has defied our American political traditions. He has rather lived a few of them to the hilt. Further, unlike his southern predecessors, we do not have to question his politics as well as his propriety.

Perhaps in a Panglossian world such men would not exist. But in our world there are too many fingerprints on the apple to justify the current display of public sanctimony in the case of Adam Powell. And if all we are going to get in return for Powell's riddance is more mealy-mouthed, psychologically blanched Negroes who sit respectfully at the back of party caucuses, then by all means let's save Adam. For in the long run, we must judge the man's politics more important than his morals. Harlem needs an Adam Clayton Powell far more than it needs an Edward Brooke. We can not demand purity of soul from men who represent a district in which society has denied even the fundamentals of decency. They need to shout, to outrage, to be --in the words of one of Mr. Powell's peers--"as irritating as a hangnail."

Finally, in our judgment of this man, let us be charitable enough to grant him a few points for adding humor and verve to that increasingly turgid assemblage of solemnly vapid men on Capitol Hill.

If his judges can bestir themselves for a few moments of understanding of the forces that cause our public men to be the way they are, they will come to only one conclusion in this matter:

Keep the seat, baby! (s. s.)

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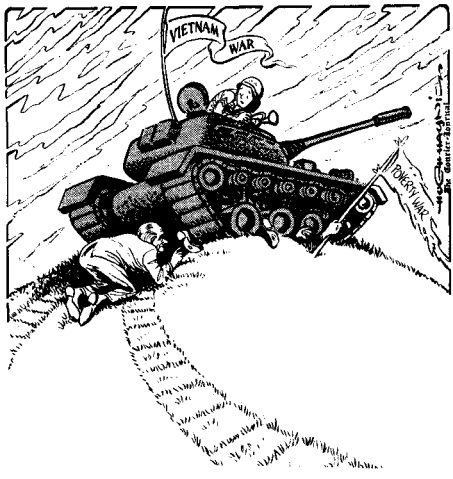

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